

## SHORT COMMUNICATION

### FIRST ACCOUNT OF BRYDE'S WHALES *BALAENOPTERA EDENI* (ANDERSON, 1878), AND OF SPINNER DOLPHINS *STENELLA* *LONGIROSTRIS* (GRAY, 1828), FROM KOMODO ISLAND, INDONESIA

A group of Bryde's whales *Balaenoptera edeni* was observed on 15 and 16 October 1995 in Loh Liang Bay (Lat 8°37'S, Long 119°30'E), Komodo National Park, Indonesia. Concurrently, groups of spinner dolphins *Stenella longirostris* were encountered. A review of the current status of knowledge of cetaceans in Indonesian waters is given by Rudolph et al. 1997 (Zool. Verh. Leiden 312: 1-42).

Loh Liang Bay forms a south-facing semicircle of two kilometers diameter, which slopes towards a depth of 60m. Whales were observed at a minimum water depth of 20m. On the first day 5-7 whales (1 calf) were observed, and 3 whales on the second day. On a few occasions an animal would approach the drifting boat when the engine was cut. The lateral ridges on the rostrum from the snout to the blowhole on either side of the balaenopterid median ridge were clearly visible. The whales were identified as Bryde's whales *Balaenoptera edeni*. They were between 6-9m long (calf approx 3m) which was judged against the known length of the survey vessel (10m) when the whales swam under the boat, no more than 3m from the observers.

All animals swam around the bay slowly, changing direction unpredictably from time to time. A cow/calf pair surfaced and dived together. One whale rolled onto its side, and one flipper and the top half of the tail fluke were visible. The tail fluke was ventrally lighter, with darker margins. Three breaches were observed in all, two in quick succession. The breaching was almost vertical, with 3/4 of body showing. The blows were low and indistinct, but clearly audible in the calm conditions.

Most whales surfaced for two or three breaths, and then performed a longer dive. Their surfacing spot could not easily be predicted after a longer dive, as it could on the shallow dives. During the surfacing and dive sequence the rostrum and blowhole emerged first at a shallow angle, followed by the back. The dorsal fin emerged as, or just after the blowhole submerged. Prior to diving the tail stock was arched, sometimes pronounced. The tail flukes never showed. The whales' colouration was dark grey-blue dorsally with some light grey marbled bands laterally and in front of the dorsal fin. The ventral surface was white with grey marbling, which showed up clearly through the water, and during the breaches. The demarcation between dorsal and ventral surface colouration was quite distinct in places. No spots or scars on the skin were observed or recorded on the photographs taken.

The Bryde's whales observed here were smaller than the 12 meters length at sexual maturity given by Cummings 1985 (In: Handbook of Marine Mammals Vol 3, Pp 137-154). The presence of a calf indicated that this was possibly a group belonging to the small, inshore form of *Balaenoptera edeni* referred to by Leatherwood and Reeves 1983 (Sierra Club Books, 302 Pp). There is, however, increasing evidence that Bryde's whales in Southeast Asia belong to a possible new species of balaenopterids, the pygmy Bryde's whale. This has been discussed by Wada and Numachi, 1991 (Reports of the International Whaling Commission (Special Issue 13) Pp 125-154) and Dizon et al. 1995 (Eleventh Biennial Conference on the Biology of Marine Mammals, Orlando).

Spinner dolphins *Stenella longirostris* are widespread in Indonesia (Rudolph et al., 1997, *ibid*). Three to four groups of 20-30 animals were observed. A few calves were present. Dolphins were noted performing the characteristic multiple spins around their horizontal axis.

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